Social and Economic Aspects of Planning
Development Alternatives
S and E Variables

PRESENTER: [Approximately 5 seconds audio missing at beginning of tape] and it may be that social scientists, economists and sociologists isn't going to play a really big part formulating the alternatives but you may need to be asking for certain information that is used to formulate the basis for your impact analysis. An example is the reasonably foreseeable development scenario for oil and gas, and it may not -- some of the information that's in that RFD may not be in the alternative itself, but it's implied. So we need to know what the basis for the impact analysis is.

Okay. Planning step 5: Again we look at the planning steps and we can see where it fits in the whole process. You know, we've identified and developed -- identified issues and developed planning criteria. We've collected data. We've analyzed current management. And now we're gearing up to formulate alternatives.

We want to incorporate social and economic factors into the management alternatives, including the themes, the goals, the objectives, management actions, allocations, allowable and restricted uses, and then we want to refine these alternatives to mitigate social and economic impacts. So we keep all of that in mind.

And this schematic that we see here kind of lays out how this might be done. You know, there's an overall vision -- let me see if I can figure out how this thing

works. Push the button.

Okay. There's an overall vision for your RMP. We identify the purpose and need. What happens if you don't have a purpose and need for doing the RMP? We got lots of state office planning environmental coordinators here. Okay. You don't need to revise it, do you? Probably not. So, you know, this ought to -- there ought to be a clear notion in everybody's mind as to why you're doing this revision.

Then you come up with some goals. What is it you're trying to accomplish with this? And you start developing alternatives. One alternative that's required is always the no action, and that's a fairly easy one right now in the BLM because nearly everywhere, except in Ben's case, we have RMP'S. So you go to those existing RMP'S and see what the no action says. Now, there might have been some amendments have that taken place that factor into defining what that no action is and there might be some policy statements and instruction memos and directives from the Secretary of Interior or court cases that help refine and define what the no action is. But it gives you -- you have a good idea what the no action is.

In order to do your social and economic impacts, you may need to know what is the level of activity that's taking place associated with the no action alternative? And that's the kind of thing that we talked about in this AMS. What's the level of activity? So if the decision is to offer -- or lease lands and minerals for oil and

gas development, the question is how much actually has been leased? If we're going to allow livestock grazing, how much livestock grazing is actually occurring? It may not be as much as is authorized.

Then we have some objectives, and some of these objectives may be common under several of the alternatives, and other objectives may be unique to a particular alternative. And then we start defining management actions and allocations and things that are common to some of the alternatives and we have other management actions that are unique to a particular alternative.

So in the process of developing the alternatives, you have the sociologist or economist that is weighing in and offering ideas, and oftentimes those ideas are in terms of helping us define what's the level of use under the current management and what will be the level of use under each of the other alternatives. If that isn't provided, then it's difficult to do much in terms of our analysis. And Stuart will talk about that more in a minute, but we have a question over here. Or comment.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: There's something that's been bothering me a lot, and that is that the no action alternative, there's plans, actions and then there's reality. And so to say that you go back to some plans which are [inaudible] years old in some cases, or we implement -- there's myths maybe out there but there's some reality to it where we develop a plan [inaudible] put on the shelf and did what we wanted to do, how do you deal with that when you are describing a

current planning exercise --

PRESENTER: Great question. The comment is sometimes the plan says one thing and in reality we're doing something else. Maybe we haven't implemented as much as we said we would do or maybe we're actually doing something that's a little bit different.

So, Maggie, how would you handle that -- [LAUGHTER] -- you know, in Oregon?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Let's see. How would we handle that? We use the no action to provide a baseline, and also a part of that is we recommend that a lot of these changes [inaudible] so we try and do it more as a [inaudible] snapshot [inaudible] and then when you do your effects analysis, you want to show that things are going to change regardless of if you revise the plan or not, that we're not dealing with a stagnant environment here. It's going to be very dynamic. So our goal is to show the trajectories then on how much our alternatives are going to bring us away from that trajectory. So we try and ground it in reality.

PRESENTER: What do you think, Sandra? How about California, how do they handle it in California?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: I haven't been there long enough to know –

[LAUGHTER]

PRESENTER: Okay, Brent, tell us how it really is in Idaho.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: We've got one plan that identifies exactly what you said, that we are not operating under our current existing management plan, and we threw that out in draft and I'm very surprised we didn't get sued over that because there is not the right information to be putting out, and then we've got other plans that, you know, basically we're progressing along and I guess there's a dichotomy, if we're doing actions that are in contravention to our plan, we've got a problem. As long as they're consistent with the plan, then we just -- just like Maggie said, what we're doing and where that's going. If we've got policy or different things that are pushing us away from where our land use plan went, and when they're MFPs they're not really tying you down on the ground, so you can essentially be doing activities that aren't consistent with your management plan based on the policy, based on what you're doing, you pull that out and that's part of the purpose [inaudible] that, hey, we've got a significant discrepancy here between what we're supposed to be doing policy-wise and what we can do according to our land use plan, and that's part of the purpose [inaudible]

PRESENTER: Any other questions? Josh?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Doesn't the current social and economic data available represent the current state under the no action alternative?

PRESENTER: Yeah. Yeah, it does. It says, here's what's going on. Or the current social and economic information represents those conditions under current management. Whatever that current management is. But it isn't limited just to BLM actions. You know, some of that information reflects what's going on from BLM actions, but some of that information, you know, we talk about community employment levels and income levels, goes way beyond what the BLM is doing. It includes BLM, but it goes even beyond there. Yeah, it does.

But I think in Montana, you know, we do the same thing, and this is really a good point. You look at your existing plans and you say, this is how we're supposed to be managing, and some of our Resource Specialists are surprised and they say, "I didn't know we were supposed to be doing this." You know, that's maybe one of the real benefits of going through the RMP process, is some these specialists maybe read the current plan for the first time, you know.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: We just did an exercise for the Great Basin RMP'S to see what plans are currently out there to cover the entire Great Basin in a geophysical sense, and it's surprising, perhaps, to some and not to others that there are whole areas that don't have plans or the plans are 40 years old and nobody knows where they are or what they cover. That is pretty common and it's pretty scary.

PRESENTER: Yeah, that's the Great Basin. That doesn't happen in Montana.

[LAUGHTER]

Stuart, you want to take over and tell us about alternatives?

PRESENTER: I guess he didn't like the answer. Sure as long as we're continuing this discussion, I'll weigh in. We often, when I was working on EIS'S more than doing science, we often used to joke that we needed really two base line condition, one, what the plan says, and one is what we're really doing, or, one, if the plan had been fully implemented, this is maybe the trajectory maybe we'd be on. And, you know -- you know, I never liked to use the term no action, especially when dealing with the public. We always called in the EIS's where I had any position of authority whatsoever and could dicker with the language, we always used "continue current management," and then we would acknowledge this is the no action alternative required under NEPA. But we would always require -- we would always call it "continue current management direction," whatever that was, whether it was entirely consistent with the plan or not. You know. The reality-based approach.

And so, you know, I found that preferable, personally, and as John said, though, you know, a lot of other -- we kind of share jurisdiction over a lot of issues with other agencies, and, you know, if maybe fish and game has undertaken a series of management actions along a river corridor that has taken care of an issue, and we haven't done anything, we haven't changed our plan, but that previous planning issue is addressed by that set of actions by another agency, and so,

you know, you kind of fold that stuff into the current direction as John said, too, and say that, well, we have this issue, but it seems to be being addressed by this other agency's actions and so you kind of take an ecosystem approach to the -- what the current management direction is not just necessarily BLM, but it's -- you know, it's kind of messy, no matter how you do it, right? But, you know --

And if you don't use "no action" with the public, that's nice, because just having a no action alternative, well, they say, our taxpayer dollars are going to -- what are you going to do, nothing? You know, well, no, we're not going to do nothing. No action doesn't mean no action, of course. You know, it means just keep doing what we're doing. So that no action just has an unpleasant connotation all around. So I try to avoid it.

A little planning digression there. You can insert this in the planning course. I guess Elvin isn't here.

So what we're talking about here is social and economic variables. They're not just for impact assessment anymore is kind of the topic here. And, you know, as a land management agency, and it's the same with the agency I work with, you know, we're accustomed to managing certain things. As John said, we're not -- it's not an economic development agency or a social engineering agency. So, you know, we kind of don't know what to deal with social or economic goals built into our alternatives. You know, we manage land. We do allocations. The chips fall where they may. And then there's social and economic impacts that result

from the actions that we have authority and responsibility to undertake, right?

But all we want to suggest here, the take-home message, is, you know, you might look for opportunities to in cert some social or economic themes in your alternatives or to insert some social or economic objectives or goals, and your cooperators are going to be suggesting these probably anyway, because they may want economic development, if they're a county commissioner, and they may say, well, we want you to do stuff that will provide jobs for our county, and you'll say, well, you know, if the opportunities are there and we can't say these are where the jobs will go, we will only hire this type of person, or people from local firms, you know, that's not -- that's kind of really beyond what we can do. But it will be a discussion item in some plans, I would imagine if you have other entities there at the table who have social and economic goals that they're trying to meet for their residents. So that's why we say collaboration and public involvement can be valuable at this step and maybe some of these ideas will come from outside the BLM.

So what are some examples? I have a couple examples. I'm going to give a couple from the infamous Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project and then a couple from the Tokiak example that I mentioned that's in your booklet, and please don't try and find it, and then I'm going -- I have a slide with a couple of possibilities that were suggested by last year's planning class, and my hope in this is that we will end up with even better ones because these are all a little weak, I think, from this group and then they will supplant the ones we have

and we'll say, these brilliant ideas were provided by last year's planning class in Phoenix, last year's social and economic aspects of planning class in Phoenix.

So what are a couple of examples? One is, you know, we knew in the Interior Columbia Basin Project that there was going to be less logging activity in most places but a certain amount of thinning and other forest treatments designed to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires. Okay, that was kind of a given for a lot of places.

So we thought, well -- and we know that you can't treat the whole Interior Columbia Basin all at once because it's a big area and we don't have that kind of money. So why don't we -- maybe we could prioritize areas for this type of treatment partly based on the level of risk and partly based on kind of the geographic distribution of benefits, and maybe try and distribute them equally or target areas where logging companies, local logging companies, may be hit the hardest, try to mitigation and maybe not point them right to the firms, but by where you locate and how you time these, maybe you could accomplish some economic mitigation efforts through how you established your priorities for these treatment areas and where you chose to undertake them first. So that was one idea.

Another idea was to -- you know, something that could be varied across management alternatives would be kind of the degree and type of collaboration with entities from the public and cooperators in implementing the plan and

monitoring the results, and maybe under one alternative we would be very proactive in soliciting input for implementation and monitoring and really go all out to try and find partners, be very aggressive, and in maybe another alternative we wouldn't. So that was another idea.

A third one was to vary the level of effort we would undertake, the Forest Service and the BLM would undertake, in impact mitigation. You know, we talked about the oil and gas impacts and how the BLM maybe felt it was going beyond its duties and may be reluctant to engage in lots of off-site mitigation. Well, recognizing that some off-site impacts would take place, this possible way to vary alternatives would say, okay, well, let's try and push that as far as we can and let's -- maybe we can't provide money but we can encourage local congressmen to seek money from Congress. We can offer to collaborate with local entities that if they're hit the hardest to serve as members of an interagency team and indicate our willingness to maybe take a leadership role or at least a partner role in these activities and be kind of aggressive about off-site mitigation, and maybe that might be a contrast from a continuing, existing management alternative.

And then another one was, you know, how active are we going to be in addressing all these cross-jurisdictional issues? This was an ecosystem-based approach to management. So the whole theme was, you know, it's the Interior Columbia Basin and the BLM has some authority and responsibility for part of it, the Forest Service has management authorities and responsibilities for part of it, and then there's like all the rest, and we can't accomplish our ecosystem goals

and objectives alone. So how much are we going to be willing to work with partners, and how aggressive are we going to be in working with other entities? And are we going to develop new institutional mechanisms within the BLM would that further this effort? So those were some of the things we talked about.

A couple from my Tokiak management situation example, and some of these were -- you know, we're still on the subsistence management issue, and a couple of these are kind of rec. planning stuff, so I don't want to spend a lot of time. One of them was increase enforcement of existing regulations. You know, how many times have we heard that? We don't need new regulations. We would be doing great if we could just adequately enforce the ones that are on the books, you know, and why are you guys suggesting new alternatives and new management programs when you can't even enforce the ones that are in place now? Right? Nobody's heard that, yeah? So that's something we hear a lot.

And, you know, things like limit horsepower for guided boats on the Goodnews River is kind of a different thing. But there's a couple here that are kind of uniquely social in nature. One of them is: Support the Quinahuk cultural program which involves visits to sport fish camps as one way to inform nonlocal anglers about culture and customs.

And this is kind of an interesting one. This might be common to all alternatives, because it doesn't cost much and it kind of makes sense, and the issue here was

that there were a lot of conflicts between sport fishermen and subsistence fishermen on the river. I mentioned safety earlier as one consideration. But a lot of the other conflicts came from the sport anglers just not having a very good understanding of local use patterns and customs along the river. And they were willing to respect them. They didn't want to come and trample the locals and trample the natives who had been there always. But they didn't know enough. So the village of Quinahuk on its own started making visits to sport fishing camps, working with the guides, and saying, hey, we want to come and put on a little program for your clients at night, and they said, sure. You know, this adds kind of an element of cultural tourism to their trip. And they're just -- the anglers are just sitting around drinking at night anyway. There's not a lot to do in a tent in a fish camp on the Kanektok River. So they said, sure, this would be great. So they would come upstream and they would talk a little about local custom and culture and talk about the use of the river and talk about the importance of subsistence, and they were very gentle about the way they talked about conflict. They were not aggressive at all. They just said, when we come across this, it bothers us. And they would talk about catch-and-release fishing, which was the dominant sport angling method of fishing, and they'd talk about the meaning of that to them, and they'd talk about playing with food, you know, and how playing with food was disrespectful in that culture. And about how the extreme of that was one guy I talked to who said, you know, if I catch a fish in one of my nets that has any evidence of having been caught and released I just let it go. I'm not going to eat that fish. I'm not going to keep that fish. You know. And then there

were other guys from Quinahuk who would be out there once in a while fishing with a rod and reel and they might release a fish once in a while.

So there was a variety of opinion, but this seemed to be a worthwhile program that would be kind of a win-win situation for everyone. So why shouldn't the Fish & Wildlife Service acknowledge this and try and provide some kind of support to it with a goal of reducing social conflict? So this is kind of a uniquely social goal of reducing social conflict along the river and thereby adding a little to maintenance of subsistence opportunities.

And here are some things -- this picture kind of kills me. This was -- I'm not sure where this came from. We had somebody who volunteered to go through, and they changed kind of the fonts and the background and added some pictures here and there and really improved the quality of the presentation. It's great. I'm not sure exactly which one of these points this picture is related to. But these were some examples that came from last year's planning class. They said, well, maybe if we have goals to reduce risk of fire in the interface area that has some social overtones to it. Or reducing user cattle conflicts in riparian areas. Prioritizing opportunities leading to resource-based jobs and development in low-income areas. That's kind of like the one we had for the Interior Columbia Basin. And as a goal, or maybe a planning criterion or something you might address in alternatives, maintain areas where community residents have a strong sense of place, which seems to be a worthwhile goal when you're developing alternatives.

So we thought out of the population of ideas that were tossed out at the last planning class these were kind of some of the ones that we thought were kind of more relevant.

So I guess the question is: Give us some better ones. In your experience doing RMP's or when you think about one you're working on now or one that you're about to start or when you think about your collaborations with partners and with other agencies, with county commissioners, does anything leap to mind that might be something that could be incorporated into an alternative that might be kind of targeted to reach a social or an economic objective?

Yeah?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: [inaudible] the Deschutes Resource Management Plan they have reduce social conflicts among recreation users by providing separate recreation experiences, and when they created that one they had in mind the conflicts between equestrian folks, mountain bikers and OHV riders. So they wanted to create separate trails -- there was also safety concerns.

PRESENTER: Okay. So, yeah, there's another good example of something reduce -- a design to reduce a kind of a uniquely social variable, social conflict. Okay, that's great.

Yeah?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: We have one we're working with counties to identify lands that could be disposed of at the county's request for economic development. We're dealing with small communities completely surrounded by public lands and for towns to grow lands have to be disposed of.

PRESENTER: Yeah, that's a great one because -- that's not a unique situation. I've run into that a couple different places where the growth of a community is limited by public lands on many sides or maybe a particularly desirable side, and so we wouldn't have "give the land to the community," but that's a nice way that's within the Bureau's area of responsibility to address the issue, and you're not promising anything, but you're doing an analysis and you are acknowledging the local community needs and saying, yeah, you know, we're aware of this and we'll do -- we'll attempt to consider this and address this as we can within our limits.

Yeah, Barb?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: One example of stream restoration, the stream has been heavily impacted by mining activities for years and years, and in the restoration they purposely left some of the mining tailings piles and some of the evidence of the prior mining at the specific request of the community because that was part of their historical heritage.

PRESENTER: That's a cool one, isn't it? That's great. I like that one.

Yeah?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: In the northern central California, the Sierra Resource Management Plan, about 80% of the area, maybe more, is in the wildland-urban interface and it's all -- hundred percent of the Field Office is high hazard, high risk fire. So we incorporated community comments, public comments, into how we would prioritize where we're going to treat for fuels first.

PRESENTER: And what were some of the bases for the community desires?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Ones that had already developed community fire plans and had done more or less work in fuels treatment. That was one of them. I can't remember the others.

PRESENTER: I like all four of those better than any of the examples I just gave you.

Yeah?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: I have a question that goes back to your example of the fishing village. In that case, the case where the natives put together a program

to actually go upstream and educate the fishing guides, and you mentioned that the Fish & Wildlife Service might want to get involved to assist in that. In cases like that, why would the federal agency want to get involved? It seems to me that a property right was established and the native village took it upon themselves to develop a strategy to work something out where their needs are met, and that any benefits to the fishing guides, the fishermen are just positive externalities that are out there. Why would the Fish & Wildlife Service want to get involved in that case?

PRESENTER: Well, I don't think we would want to get -- it depends on what "get involved" means. If it means providing money, you know, to help pay for their time and to help pay for gas to go upriver and to help pay for any, you know, other aspects of those trips that were needed, you know, that would be kind of getting involved without, you know, changing the nature of the program or the effort.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: I guess if they're not asking for it, I guess, in certain instances it seems like the federal government, any involvement would just distort things even more if it's already working itself out based on the current property rights.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: We have a similar one that is attached to an oil permit. So an applicant that is going to be working on the North Slope has to have an orientation program for their employees as to the local culture and what people

do, and it may very well be that Fish & Wildlife Service had to give that lodge owner a permit and it was attached to that permit as kind of a stipulation like that as well or something.

We also have another unique one in Alaska where we have established a subsistence advisory panel that actually provides advice to the BLM on a case-by-case basis with things, with issues with regard to subsistence, and they meet four times a year, and we're able to get around FACA with it because each one of the members is a representative of the federally recognized tribe in the area. So it's part of our tribal consultation that we do with -- and it works really well because in a large-scale plan you talk about this may happen or this might happen or this might happen, but having a panel like this we can actually meet when actually activity is taking place.

PRESENTER: And that's apart from the subsistence advisory structure that --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: It's apart from the RAC. It's apart from setting the rules as to what can be taken and can't be taken --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: And they're very active, too, they're well informed. They know just about everything there is to know about public lands, I think.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: But there was a mitigation measure that was attached to an alternative within our plan --

PRESENTER: That's great because it's an example of how a new institution, a new forum a new mechanism for accomplishing that objective was created and was created in a way that was FACA okay and so that's a little different one, but I like that a lot.

And to answer your question in the back, yeah, you might not want to mess with it at all, but if it looked like it was going to falter or something due to lack of funding, you might want to be able to step in and say, "Oh, we think this is having benefits," but if it's going okay, your attitude might be, "Well, hands off." I can see.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: [inaudible] working with local people, and last year Fish & Wildlife Service people were in Barrow, and they ran across a net [inaudible] and they took the net out with a lot of fish in it and didn't tell the person.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Yellow [inaudible] are potentially going to be a T&E species. So Fish & Wildlife Service have a responsibility for that where that's concerned.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: So we, you know -- agencies need to work with the local users to --

PRESENTER: You bet. That's a pretty unfortunate incident, yeah.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: We defused it, thank goodness. [inaudible]

PRESENTER: Good.

Charise?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: In one of the parks I worked at we developed a Resource Management Plan for [inaudible] that was claimed as ancestral property for the local Pueblo, and every time we went to a meeting they would say just get it done, just get it done, and we had no authority or ability to do that. So it couldn't be incorporated into planning alternatives, but what we worked out was a -- we were protecting the resource through research and special techniques. In this case it was [inaudible] preservation. [inaudible] are hollowed out into the stone and they were habitat for prehistoric peoples there. The plaster paintings were coming off and other issues were associated with deterioration. The public visiting the area was not respectful in some cases and trails were in wrong locations causing extreme erosion. So we developed a plan jointly such that implementation of the plan was dependent on training the local Pueblo youth to give them skills that not employed them but also gave them a skill that maybe could help them preserve their past in the future, but it was -- you struggle with hiring problems because it's selective hiring, so you had to use

students to do it, but it was -- it meant that they became invested in the management actually of this unit when we were not really able to give it back to them physically, spiritually.

PRESENTER: So you found a way to kind of not give back the land but kind of give back the stewardship.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Yes.

PRESENTER: I like that one, too.